Henry D. Lauredon

THE CAPTURE OF JEFFERSON DAVIS

A NARRATIVE

OF THE

PART TAKEN BY WISCONSIN TROOPS

BY

HENRY HARNDEN

BREVET BRIGADIER-GENERAL; LATE COMMANDER
OF THE FIRST WISCONSIN CAVALRY

MADISON, WIS.
1898

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PREFACE.

THE following account of the part taken by the First Wisconsin Cavalry in the Capture of Jefferson Davis was originally prepared substantially as it is now presented, at the request of Comrades of the G. A. R., and has already been given before a number of the different Posts. It has been put into its present form for the reason that it is believed it will be a pleasure to the surviving members of the regiments, and to their children and friends to have the same for convenient perusal.

My personal recollection has been refreshed as far as possible by re-reading the official records and reports made at the time, and also by letters and correspondence had with persons who took part in the capture. I have endeavored to make it as correct as possible, and the

more so on account of the very unfortunate collision which took place between the First Wisconsin and the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, mention of which it seems almost necessary to make in any narrative concerning the matter. I have endeavored to tell a plain story in a plain way, and as such I submit it to the judgment of my comrades who took part with me in the struggle which occurred almost a generation since.

HENRY HARNDEN.

Madison, November 8, 1898.

The Story of the Capture of Jefferson Davis.

AFTER the defeat of Hood's army at Nashville, Tennessee by General Thomas, on the 15th and 16th of December, 1864, the Union cavalry under General Wilson pursued the retreating rebels until the remnants of their army escaped across the Tennessee river into Mississippi. General Wilson encamped his cavalry at Gravelly Springs and Waterloo, along the line of the Tennessee, preparatory to the commencement of his great raid through Alabama and Georgia, which resulted in the rout of the

rebel General Forest, and the scattering and capture of the greater part of his army, also the capture of Selman and Montgomery, Alabama, and Columbus and Westpoint, Georgia, finally winding up with the capture of Macon, Georgia. The First Wisconsin Cavalry composed a part of these forces, and bore a conspicuous part in all that was accomplished on this, the greatest and most successful cavalry raid of the war.

The rebel army which General Thomas defeated at Nashville was the same that had opposed General Sherman from Chattanooga to Atlanta the previous summer, and was, at the time of the battle of Nashville, composed of about forty thousand of the best troops of the confederacy, but so total was their defeat and rout that when they

finally got across Tennessee, there was only about twelve thousand of their infantry left. General Wilson, with the First, Second, and Third Divisions of the Cavalry Corps, and three batteries of artillery, about fifteen thousand men, crossed the Tennessee river on the 11th day of March, 1865, at Chickasaw, Alabama, arriving at Macon, Georgia, April 20, 1865.

While resting quietly in camp about two miles north of the city on the evening of May 6, 1865, I received orders to report at once to headquarters. I mounted my horse and rode over to headquarters as ordered. I there found General J. G. Croxton in command, in the absence of General McCook. The General informed me that it was reported that Jeff. Davis was in South Carolina, making his way south into

Georgia, that a portion of his cabinet was with him, and that they were accompanied by six or seven hundred men; that I had been selected to command a detachment of one hundred and fifty men from the First Wisconsin Cavalry to go and endeavor to cut him off and capture him if possible; that I must march immediately and not wait for rations.

I enquired if he thought one hundred and fifty men a sufficient number to take on the expedition. He replied "That in the opinion of General Wilson, it was." He said that the escort of Davis was greatly demoralized, and many were leaving him; that they would be poorly armed, and it was doubtful if they would fight at all, but if they should fight, he would risk our being able to take care of them. He also said the country through which our route

lay was very poor, and that it would be difficult to subsist a large party, and that we must start immediately and not wait for rations, adding, as I left him, that if there was a fight and Jeff. Davis should get hurt, General Wilson would not feel very bad over it.

I then returned to my camp, and soon had a detail of one hundred and fifty men selected, all well armed and mounted, ready to march.

It was about sunset when we passed through Macon, and crossed the bridge over the Ochemulgee river, and then took a line of march towards Savannah. General Croxton had furnished me with a large map of Georgia, so that I was able to shape our course correctly. During the night we came to a plantation where there was forage, so we halted and fed our horses. Up to

this time the men had no idea as to where we were going or for what purpose we had been ordered out.

When ready to mount our horses, I made known the object of our expedition. I frankly told them that if we encountered Davis and his escort they would greatly outnumber us, and were probably the pick of the Confederate army; that they would no doubt fight desperately; that it would be a battle to the death, and that Jeff. Davis must not be allowed to escape in any event, but as we had never been whipped, I had no fear of being whipped now. All of which was greeted with cheers.

We continued our march all night and the next day (May 7th) until near evening, when we arrived at Dublin, a considerable town, situated on the west bank of the Oconee

river. I had sent out scouting parties during the night and day, to endeavor to get information in regard to parties who were continually crossing our road, to ascertain if some of them might not be the Davis party, but these men always proved to be from General Johnston's army, who, having surrendered a short time before to General Sherman, were going home on parole.

These diversions caused our march to be somewhat delayed. Upon arriving at Dublin I noticed the people appeared considerably excited at our presence, but I caused it to be given out that we were establishing courier posts between Macon and Savannah, a little piece of strategy allowable in a military campaign. We bivouaced on a flat between the town and the river. I had several

invitations from gentlemen to take up my quarters at their houses, and for some reason they appeared quite anxious I should do so; all of which surprised me, as I had never been the recipient of such attentions before.

By some means I got an inkling that a party with wagons had passed through the town that day, but to my questions as to who they were I got only evasive answers, but I finally concluded it was some sutler from Johnston's army. The town was full of rebel officers in uniform, and as they stood in groups by themselves, talking, I thought their looks boded no good to us. Politely declining all invitations, I made my bivouac with the command, and being weary with thirty-six hours of duty, twenty-four of which had been spent in the saddle,

we threw ourselves upon the ground to sleep.

For several months I had been served by an old colored man named "Bill." He had been a slave and owned by a staff officer of General Bragg. He had often waited upon General Bragg as well as his master, but when the rebels were hustled out of Tennessee by General Rosencranse in 1863, Bill got left behind and fell in with us, and I employed him. He was as homely as a hedgehog and a perfect tyrant over the other darkies, but he was as true as steel to me, and withal very intelligent. He happened to be with us on this expedition.

I had scarcely lain down to sleep when "Bill" came and touched me. "Colonel, Colonel," he said, "wake up; I have found a colored man who will tell you something." "Well,

what is it?" said I. It was dark as pitch, but I could see the whites of their eyes, and I knew they had something important to tell.

The man said Jeff. Davis had been in town that day. I said, "How do you know it was Jeff. Davis? what makes you think so?" "Well," he said, "all the gentlemen called him President Davis, and he had his wife with him, and she was called Mrs. Davis."

He said they had come over the river on a ferry. They had a number of nice wagons with them, and some fine saddle-horses led behind the wagon in which President Davis and his wife rode. He further said that they were going to dine with Judge Rose (Judge Rose was one of the gentlemen who had been so persistent in urging me to spend the night at his house), but before they

could get the dinner ready they heard something that made the party leave in a hurry, going south on the river road. He further stated that there was another large party that did not come over the river. I questioned him closely, and his answers appeared straight, but I was fearful of a trick to send me off on some side-track. I said to Bill, "Do you think he is telling me the truth, and that I ought to believe him?" "Sartin, shoor, Kurnel; you can believe him; he is telling you God's troof."

It will be seen that if Bill had not been with us we would have known nothing of Davis having crossed our track, and we would have gone the next morning toward Savannah, and Jeff. Davis would in all probabilities have escaped capture and got away into Cuba, in company with Judah

P. Benjamin and others, or across the Mississippi to Kirby Smith.

To get a little more information I called up a couple of men and went down to the ferry and interviewed the ferryman as to whom he had brought over the river that day, but I could get nothing out of him. He was either too stupid or ignorant, or too obstinate, to give us any information of importance. I have always been sorry that we did not throw the old scamp into the river, as my sergeant wanted to do.

As soon as we got back to the bivouac I called up the men to saddle for a march. Lieutenant Hewitt, with thirty men, had been left back at some cross-roads and had not yet come up, so detailing Lieutenant Lane, with forty-five men to remain at Dublin, and scout from there up and down the river, I with

the balance (seventy-five men), started south in the direction the Davis party was reported to have taken. It was very dark and the roads in the pine woods were only trails. We soon became confused, and after wandering around for some time, found ourselves coming into Dublin again. Picking our road once more, and daylight coming, we struck out on the river road at a rapid gait, on the morning of May 8th. Five miles out we came to Turkey creek where we found the bridge torn up. While the bridge was being repaired, I strolled up to a log house near by and questioned the woman in regard to the party who had crossed the evening before.

She said a large party had passed, but she did not know who they were, but she said that a couple of the

gentlemen had been in her house and drank some milk, and she showed me a little scrap of paper which she said they had dropped. I saw it was a piece of a Richmond paper of recent date. A bright little girl standing by, said she had heard one gentleman call the other Colonel Harrison, and the other was addressed as Mr. President. Upon my inquiring as to how they were dressed, she said they were almost as handsomely dressed as I was, but their coats were not alike. Pointing to my shoulder-straps, I inquired if they had such things on their coats, she said "No, they had not, but one had stars on his collar and gold on his sleeves, but the other had nothing, and neither one was like mine." The child's description convinced me that one was an officer of high rank and the other

Jeff. Davis. So convinced was I that I had really now got on the track of Jeff. Davis, that I wrote a dispatch and started a courier with it to General Wilson, but the man was captured by some confederates, taken into the woods, robbed of his horse and equipments and left to make his way to Macon on foot, which he did, but not until after my return there.

The bridge being repaired we pushed on again through the pine woods. The wagon tracks could now be plainly seen, but it soon commenced to rain a regular pour-down and the tracks we were following were obliterated. We were now in the great pine woods of the south, the soil nothing but white sand with scarcely an inhabitant, and soon lost all track of the party ahead, but still pushed blindly on.

I sent parties circling around to find the road, but they were unsuccessful. They, however, found a horseman and brought him to me. In reply to my questions, he said he knew nothing of any party, that he was only a poor citizen hunting some lost sheep.

I noticed that he was riding a fine horse. I told him that I would take his horse and he could hunt his sheep on foot. At this he began to plead earnestly. I told him to quit lying and tell me where the wagons were that had been somewhere near there the evening before and I would let him go with his horse. He then confessed he did know where the party had camped over night, but it was eleven miles away and in another direction entirely from that in which we were headed.

"Guide us there," said I, "and

you will have your horse, otherwise you go home on foot;" to this he agreed. In order that this man might not lose his way I had him ride between two good men with loaded carbines. He took us in a westerly direction to where the Davis party had been in camp, but they were gone.

According to promise, I dismissed the guide, and he left us in a hurry. We found here a poor plantation and a little forage, which we appropriated from the owner. I inquired where the wagon party had gone; he did not know, but thought they had crossed Gum swamp, and that the rains had so raised the water that it would be impossible for us to get through.

"Get your horse," I said, "and guide us through to the other side of the swamps and we will go,

otherwise we shall stay and eat you out of house and home." He then quickly got his horse and led the way through the swamp, where the water for miles was up to the saddles.

Dismissing this guide, we pushed on through those dense woods, over a fairly plain track until darkness compelled us to halt for the night. During the night there came up a terrible storm of wind, rain, thunder and lightning, and, as if to add to our already discomfort, several great trees came down with a crash in our near vicinity, but our weariness was such that we were disturbed but for a moment.

As soon as it was light enough to see, on the morning of May 9th, we pushed on in a southeast direction, until we struck the Ochemulgee river, the same we had crossed be-

fore at Macon. Continuing down the river some distance, we came to a ferry. By our haste to get over, the boat was damaged so that only a half load of horses could be taken over at a time. This delayed us a couple of hours, then we pushed on a few miles to a little town called Abbeville.

By inquiring, we learned that a party with wagons had passed through the town during the night and that they had gone towards Irwinsville. We halted and fed our horses and then started on the road towards Irwinsville. Just as we were moving out we saw four soldiers in United States uniform, coming down the road from the north. They informed me they belonged to the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, Lieutenant-Colonel Pritchard commanding, and that the regiment was near at

hand. Sending on our detachment under Lieutenant Clinton, I rode, accompanied by my orderly, to meet Colonel Pritchard. After introducing myself, I inquired if he had any news of Jeff. Davis. He said he had not, but that he had been ordered with his regiment to Abbeville to patrol the river and to prevent Davis from crossing. He also informed me that his orders were to encamp at Abbeville and guard the crossings of the Ochemulgee, and he gave me no intimation that he intended any other course. He had left Macon since I had, but up to this time had heard nothing of Davis. As his errand was the same as mine, I thought it my duty to give him all the information in my possession, in regard to the movement of Davis. I told him that we had been on the track of

Davis for three days, and that Davis with one party had crossed over the Ochemulgee during the night and gone towards Irwinsville, but there was a larger party of confederates who were somewhere the other side of the river. He inquired if I needed any more men, I said not unless he could spare some rations as our party had next to nothing to eat. He said they had marched suddenly and had no rations.

Bidding him good-bye, my orderly, James Aplin, and I, left him and pushed on and overtook our party. We shortly came to the place where the Davis party had lunched. They had left so recently that their fires were still burning. We continued to march on until dark, when coming to a swale where there was water and a little grass, we halted to rest and graze our

horses. All we had for rations was a little damaged corn-meal. We lay down to rest for a spell, but before the break of day, we were in in our saddles again.

At this time I felt confident that we were in the near proximity to the Davis party, and had only halted so as not to come upon them in the night. I expected that Davis would camp on the other side of a river ahead, and I thought if we attempted to cross the ford in the dark, Davis would take the alarm and escape.

May 10th, putting forward an advance guard of a sergeant, George Hussey, and six men, with instructions to keep a little ahead and to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy, we moved on. We had made but a mile or so when our advance guard were fired upon suddenly, by what

I judged to be twenty or thirty muskets. Galloping forward at the head of ten men, I met the sergeant with his party coming back with several of his men wounded. He said they had run into the enemy's pickets and had been fired upon. I directed the sergeant to follow and then dashed on, when we were met with another volley, so close that their fire came right in our faces, and the bullets rattled like hail on the trees. I could just see the forms of the men on account of the darkness. Seeing that they were in considerable force and determined to stand their ground, I got my men into line and dismounting a part, we advanced on the enemy. After giving us a third volley we opened fire on them and they then retreated into a swamp.

It was now getting a little light. At this time a man called my attention to about one hundred mounted men who were coming down on our left flank. He said, "Colonel, there is more than a hundred of them coming." I said, "Never mind boys, we will whip them yet." Directing Sergeant Horr, with ten men of Company A, to pursue the party who had fired on us first and retreated, and not to let them rally, I next turned my attention to the new comers who were between us and the light. The new comers opened fire on us as they approached.

Forming a line facing the approaching enemy, we opened upon them with our repeating rifles (Spenser carbines). They were soon thrown into confusion. I had left part of my men under Lieutenant Clinton, mounted; seeing that the

enemy were in confusion, I now ordered Clinton to prepare for a sabre charge. Two of the men hearing me and understanding I had ordered the charge, drew their sabres and putting spurs to their horses, dashed at the enemy.

I called them back not being quite ready, as I wanted to give our footmen time to replenish their magazines. Just as I was about to give the final order to charge, Sergeant Horr came running up and said we were fighting Union men. That he had captured one of them and thus ascertained the fact. At hearing this I rode in front of our line and shouted to "stop firing," which soon ceased on both sides. Riding forward, the first man I met was Colonel Pritchard. So surprised was I that for sometime I could not realize that it was Colonel Pritchard, but as

soon as I knew him, I asked him how it was that he was there fighting us.

He explained that after parting with me the day before, at Abbeville, twenty-five miles distance, and ascertaining from me that Davis had already got across the river, and finding that there was another road to Irwinsville, he had selected one hundred and fifty of his best men, well mounted, and by marching all night had arrived at Irwinsville before daylight. Hearing that a party with wagons was camped out a little ways from the town, he had marched out toward it, guided by a negro. He had sent twenty-five men around to the back of the camp, and it was these men who had mistaken us for enemies, had fired upon us so recklessly with such unfortunate results.

He said some of his men had just

taken possession of the camp, which was only about fifty yards away. I inquired if Jeff. Davis had been captured. He answered that he did not know who had been captured, as he had not been to the camp himself. In this unfortunate affair, two of the Michigan men were killed, one officer and several men wounded. Of the Wisconsin men three were wounded, but none were killed.

Colonel Pritchard and I rode into the Davis camp together, which was just across a little swale, only a few rods from where our skirmish took place. The first person we saw in the camp was Mr. John H. Reagen, the Postmaster-General of the late Confederacy, lately the United States Senator from Texas. He said, "Well, you have taken the old gentleman at last." I said, "Who do you mean?" He said, "I mean

President Davis." "Please point him out," said I. "There he stands" said he, pointing to a tall, elderly, and rather dignified looking gentleman, standing a short distance away. We rode up, dismounted and saluted, and I asked if this was Mr. Davis. "Yes," he replied, "*I am President Davis.*" At this the soldiers set up a shout that Jeff. Davis was captured.

Up to this time none of the men who actually arrested him, knew that he was Jeff. Davis. One soldier said, "What! that man Jeff. Davis? That's the old fellow that when I stopped him had his wife's shawl on." About this time we, that is Mr. Davis, Colonel Pritchard and myself were the center of a circle, composed of soldiers and others of the Davis party. In the background some soldiers set up a song:

LIEUT.-COL. HENRY HARNDEN.

First Wisconsin Cavalry. Brevet Brigadier General of Volunteers, 1865.

"We will hang Jeff. Davis on a sour apple tree," to the tune of John Brown, which did not add to his comfort in the least.

In the camp were two tents and eight ambulances, each drawn by four mules. There were also several fine saddle horses. Besides Jeff. Davis, there were Mr. Reagan, Colonel Harrison, Mrs. Davis, her sister, Miss Howel, and a number of rebel officers from Johnston's army and a lot of teamsters, servants and others, but no fighting men.

It appears that when the fighting began, Mr. Davis was sleeping in his tent. Alarmed at the noise, he hastily arose and threw a shawl, or dressing-gown around him, and started out, but meeting a soldier, was stopped and ordered back into his tent. It was some time before

he could understand what had happened. He heard the noise of the sharp skirmish, and saw the dead and wounded brought in, and knowing that he had no fighting men with him, he could not understand what it meant, until explained to him afterwards.

I entered into conversation with him, but with poor satisfaction to him or to me. I would not call him Mr. President, but always addressed him as Mr. Davis, which seemed greatly to annoy him, and he retaliated by speaking of "your government," with the greatest contempt. I said to him that I came very near making his acquaintance back at Dublin, three days before, and if he had fulfilled his engagement to dine with Judge Rose, that I should have done so. Upon this, he turned on me with great hauteur and said: "Well, sir,

I can assure you that if you had made my acquaintance then, this thing would not have happened as it has. I had those with me then, who would not have permitted this indignity to have been put upon me, and it was well for you, sir, that you were not in time to see me then." I replied, that it would have afforded me pleasure to have met his friends and tried the question with them. Every few moments he would turn away from me, but he would soon come back to the tilt again. He wanted to know if my government authorized me to harrass women and children through the country in the manner I was doing. I replied no, that I was not after women and children, but I was sent after him. Then his wrath arose again, and he poured out a torrent of abuse against my government, which

was treating him with such indignity.

While conversing with him I saw a cask of brandy pitched out of an ambulance and the head was soon knocked in and the soldiers were running from all parts, with cups and canteens, so I called Colonel Pritchard's attention to it, and said it ought to be stopped, as there might soon be trouble over it. The Colonel went over and tried to stop it, but with poor success, I suspect, as the condition of the soldiers soon showed. Mr. Davis seeing the way things were being thrown out of the wagons, turned to me and inquired which of us was the ranking officer. As rank depended upon the date of our commissions, and we were both Lieutenant-Colonels, I replied that I did not know. He meant to inquire which of us was in command,

but as he had been insolent, I did not propose to explain to him that we were two separate commands just come together. He then turned to some confederate officers and said that things had come to a pretty state of affairs when United States soldiers did not know who their commanding officer was, and that it was no wonder that the privates were plunderers and robbers. After a little more talk, his wrath which had for some time been rising, got completely the better of him, and then he turned his back upon me for the last time.

In speaking to his wife he blamed her for his being captured, for he said, if he had acted on his own judgment he would have been with the others of his party, and this thing would not have happened as it had. It appeared that she had

persuaded him to accompany her a little further than he had at first intended. Mrs. Davis took him by the arm and tried to pacify him. She told him "never to mind him, that he was not worth minding." She also said, as she was leading him away, that she hoped we would not irritate the President for some one might get hurt.

After making all allowance for the humiliating position in which Mr. Davis found himself placed at that time, I came to the conclusion that he was a greatly overrated man. His manner and all that he said, his blaming his wife and other circumstances, all went to show that he had no real nobility about him.

It appears that up to their arrival at Dublin, Mr. Davis was accompanied by his Cabinet officers and quite an escort of Texans, but they

were separated, the main part going down the east side of the Oconee river, while the party of Mr. Davis crossed to the west side and were headed for Mississippi, the home of Mrs. Davis.

Mr. Davis only intended to keep her company for a day or two longer, then leave her and make his way to General Kirby Smith in the lower Mississippi, and continue the war some longer.

In regard to what would have happened in case we had met Mr. Davis at Dublin, it is only problematical. The Wisconsin troops were veterans selected from one of the best regiments in the service, all well armed, mounted, and disciplined, while the confederates although in greatly superior numbers, were disorganized and discouraged. That they were brave men and desperate fighters,

no one will dispute, but that the meeting did not take place, in my opinion, was well for Jeff. Davis and his escort, for in the language of Mrs. Davis, "some one would have got hurt."

As to the hoop-skirt story, I know but very little of it, but think it grew out of the remark by a soldier, that, when he stopped him, he had his wife's shawl on. As I saw nothing and heard nothing of any female apparel at the time I never took any stock in that story. After resting for a short time and caring for the wounded and burying the dead, we all began our return march to Macon, where we arrived the day after, May 12, 1865.

I first made my verbal report to General Wilson and received from him his hearty approval of all we had done. We then heard that a reward

of one hundred thousand dollars had been offered for the capture of Davis, a fact of which, up to this time, we Wisconsin men had been ignorant.

The reward offered for the capture of Davis was first awarded to the Michigan regiment, although the greater part of the regiment was twenty-five miles away at the time, but the great injustice of this was so apparent that Congress appointed a committee to investigate, and this committee reversed the award by giving to the men who were actually present, of both regiments, shares alike according to rank and pay. General Wilson received a share equal to that of Colonel Pritchard and myself.

As the war was then over and Colonel Pritchard and myself were soon mustered out of service, no

military court of inquiry was ever held to determine the responsibility of the collision which resulted so disastrously to several Union soldiers, but General Wilson says in his official report, that Colonel Harnden was in no way responsible as he had no means of knowing that the parties in his front were other than enemies.

Over thirty odd years have passed and gone since the event narrated above took place, and many of the participants have gone to their long homes, but the memory of the comrades are still fresh to me and growing dearer as time rolls on.

I will add one word more of tribute to their praise. For the whole seven days of the expedition, not one word of complaint or a murmur was heard, although marching under the burning sun or in the blinding rain, by

day or night, with scarcely any food to eat, without rest, until it seemed as if human nature could stand no more; and yet, weary as they were, they were ready to face their enemies in battle, well knowing them to be more than two to one of themselves. Their only thought was, it is duty.

In Major-General Wilson's official report, made to the war department in regard to the capture of Jeff. Davis, he says: "Upon receiving notice that Mr. Davis was making his way into Georgia, I ordered the General commanding the First Division, to detail one hundred and fifty men from his best regiment, commanded by his best officer, to go in pursuit of Davis, and in obedience to the order, General Croxton sent Colonel Harnden with a detachment from the First Wisconsin cavalry."

It will be observed that one hundred and fifty men of the Wisconsin regiment were sent out to do the same work and to meet the same risks for which whole regiments were in other cases thought to be necessary. How well they acquitted themselves of the great responsibility is shown by the results they accomplished.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

A number of questions have been asked with respect to the capture, which I will try to answer as best I can.

What was done with Jefferson Davis?

After he was brought to Macon, he was sent under guard by the way of Savannah to Old Point, Virginia, where he was kept a prisoner

for several months, Governor Upham, of Wisconsin, then a Lieutenant in the United States army, being one of the officers to guard him. Davis was finally released on bail, Horace Greely and others going on his bond.

Who was Captain Yeoman?

He was a Captain in an Ohio regiment, who somewhere in the Carolinas fell in with the Davis party, and passing himself off for a Confederate, traveled with them for several days, and it was he who contrived to get the dispatch to General Wilson at Macon, which caused him to send a number of regiments in different directions to try and head Davis off, and which did finally result in his capture.

How was Davis dressed?

He wore a common slouched hat, nice fine boots, no spurs, coat and

pants of light blue English broadcloth; taking all circumstances into consideration, he was neatly dressed.

Who captured him?

It was said and not disputed at the time, that the soldier's name who said "halt" to Davis, was Munger, a corporal in the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, but he did not then know that it was Davis.

How did the hoop-skirt story get started?

When we got back to Macon, General Wilson sent for me and made me tell him all about my pursuit and the incidents of the capture of Davis. The General insisted upon every particular as how he appeared, what he said, how he was dressed, etc.

After narrating all, I told him that I heard the soldier who halted

him say, that when Davis came out of his tent, he had his wife's shawl on. This remark of mine was telegraphed north, and when it came back, it had apparently grown into its well known proportions.

Who was to blame for the collision?

Perhaps that is not for me to say, but after the lapse of these many years, and looking back across the intervening time, and realizing that men may be mistaken in their judgments, I feel that I owe it to historical truth and to the memory of the brave men of the First Wisconsin Cavalry, who were with me, and who took part in this closing scene in the war, to once more carefully review the circumstances of that unfortunate collision, and to submit to those who care to read

this narrative, the evidence upon the subject which I have been able to gather from official reports and from the statements of those who were present, and personally witnessed the facts.

The official reports of the Union and Confederate armies have now been put in print, and are accessable to every one, and all correspondence and reports relating to this matter are public property and easy to be examined by any one who cares to turn over the pages of those voluminous records. Upon carefully re-reading these reports and, from statements furnished me by men who were with me, and which I subjoin to this narrative, there are some things which have become more clear to me now, than even at the time. One fact which has grown upon me is, that it is more

than probable that the Commander of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry knew when he left Macon, of the one hundred thousand dollars reward which had been offered for the capture of Jeff. Davis. In the light of the evidence it seems to me impossible that he should not have known it, and the action which he took with respect to the capture has driven me to the unwilling belief that for some reason he was either not unwilling that such a collision should take place, or that he was grossly negligent with respect to preventing it.

As early as the 30th of April, General Grant had begun to take measures to secure, if possible, the capture of the president of the Southern Confederacy, and had given strict orders to have the Mississippi river patrolled and guarded. Gen-

eral Thomas had also taken measures to accomplish the same end. Reports had begun to come in from different sources that Davis had been trying to escape with several millions of specie. On the 2d day of May, 1865, President Johnson had issued a proclamation, offering a reward of "one hundred thousand dollars for the arrest of Jefferson Davis, twenty-five thousand dollars for the arrest of Clement C. Clay, and others."

On May 6th, General Wilson at Macon, Georgia, issued hand-bills, a *fac-simile* of which is produced in the February *Century*, 1890, in the article upon "The Pursuit and Capture of Jefferson Davis," offering a reward of one hundred thousand dollars in gold, and these were posted in Macon as early as the 7th, and widely distributed throughout all

that region. Colonel Pritchard did not leave Macon until eight o'clock on the evening of the 7th, and after these hand-bills must have been thoroughly distributed throughout that whole vicinity.

In this I am confirmed by the statement of Clark W. Seely, of Company D, First Wisconsin Cavalry, which is hereto annexed. Seely was wounded in the collision, and was sent back in the ambulance of the Fourth Michigan, and upon the road to Abbeville upon the very day of the collision, he heard some of Colonel Pritchard's command asking who would get the reward, and upon Seely's question they informed him that there was a reward of one hundred thousand dollars for Davis's capture.

The circumstances of the collision itself seem scarcely able to be ex-

plained upon any other theory. I venture to call attention to two statements made by General Wilson respecting this matter. In General Wilson's report to General John Rawlins, dated January 17, 1867, he used this significant language referring to my meeting with Colonel Pritchard: "Colonel Harnden having informed him that he had force enough to cope with Davis, Colonel Pritchard determined to march another road leading to Irwinville by a more circuitous route. *Why he did not send a courier on the trail pursued by Colonel Harnden to notify the latter of his intentions, has not been explained.* This would probably have prevented the collision which afterward occurred between his regiment and that of Colonel Harnden, and would not have

rendered the capture of Davis less certain."*

In his article in the *Century Magazine* for February, 1890, General Wilson says: "Unfortunately, Colonel Pritchard had failed to apprise Colonel Harnden of his plan of operations, and the latter, entirely unconscious of all that had occurred since he left Abbeville at three o'clock the previous afternoon, had called his men without the blare of bugles from their slumber, and after a hasty breakfast of coffee and hard bread, had taken the road to gather in the party which he had been pursuing with such untiring energy for two days and nights." . . . A careful examination of all the reports made by Colonel Pritchard to the various officers fail to show that

*Part I, Vol. XLIX, page 377, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.

any special precaution was taken by him to prevent the collision, and the differences in his reports seem very marked, as the necessity for making excuses for his negligence became more apparent.

In his report of May 25th to the Secretary of War, he says: "Sharp firing was commenced between the dismounted forces under Lieutenant Purinton, and what was supposed at the time to be the rebel forces guarding a train. The firing was about one hundred rods in rear of the camp, and across a narrow swamp. I immediately ordered all my forces forward to the scene of the firing, leaving only a force sufficient to guard the camp and prisoners. On arriving on the ground, I found my men engaging a force of dismounted men who were concealed behind trees, etc. I at once formed

my men in line, dismounted them, threw out a line of skirmishers, who were advancing handsomely, when I became apprehensive that we were contending with some of our own men, from the determination displayed on their part and the *peculiar report of their firearms.* I ordered my men at once to cease firing, and rode out towards our opponents and hallooed to them, asking them who they were, and received the reply, "First Wisconsin." In his report to General Minty, July 2, 1865.

Speaking of the Davis camp, he says: "I at first thought that it must be the First Wisconsin, but upon further inquiry, learned that the party had tents and wagons, which I knew was not the case with the First Wisconsin, but *thinking that there might still be some mis-*

take regarding the character of the party, I gave my officers strict orders with reference to learning the character of all parties before firing upon them."*

Lieutenant Purinton in his affidavit on page 529 of the same records, speaking of Colonel Pritchard, says: "Giving me special orders, and cautioning me to ascertain the character of all parties and men whom I might meet before firing upon them, as the First Wisconsin Cavalry might be on the road. In obedience to said orders, I successfully executed my mission in gain ing the rear of the camp without discovery."

And he then states how he carried out that order, showing that he used no efforts to make known who he was, although he was expecting the

*Part I, vol. 49, p. 532, Official Records.

First Wisconsin to be at that very point at that moment. He says:

"I had held my position for an hour or more when I heard mounted men approaching us from the rear, as we were then facing towards the camp. When they had approached to within fifteen or twenty rods of my position I discovered that there were six or eight of them, when I stepped out in person and halted them, and received the reply at first "Friends," when I ordered one to ride forward, which they refused to do. I then asked them what command they belonged to, then they replied, 'By G—d, you are the men we are looking for.' I then told them that if we were the men they were looking for to come forward, when they immediately wheeled and fled, when I, supposing they must be the enemy, ordered

my men to fire on them." Though one feels like commending the kindness of Lieutenant Purinton in thus endeavoring to relieve his superior officer from blame, by stating that he carried out the orders of Colonel Pritchard, in this blundering, negligent, and almost disobedient manner, still it seems from the above conflicting statements that Lieutenant Purinton, although willing to assume the blame, is not in reality the one responsible for it. Both he and Colonel Pritchard expected the First Wisconsin at that very point. Both of them say that they were looking for them to come. Both say that they were endeavoring and taking unusual pains, but neither claim that they told or in any way disclosed their identity before firing, and acknowledge that they were at a place where they say they ex-

pected the First Wisconsin Cavalry to be at that very moment.

Lieutenant Purinton expected friends from that direction, not enemies. My command expected enemies, and not friends at the point where Sergeant Hussy was met and halted. He did his duty as a brave man and a skillful soldier. He retreated and did not give himself up in an unsoldierly way at the command to advance from the lips of a supposed enemy.

The statement of Private Seely, hereto annexed is singularly pertinent. He says: "As soon as we halted, the men that were left at the ferry, (a portion of Pritchard's command) crowded around and wanted to know how the men came to fire into the Wisconsin men. Some said: 'we were ordered to fire, so we fired, but we were sure it was

Union Cavalry by the rattle of their sabers.' I heard several say the same thing."

The above statement corresponds with Colonel Pritchard's remarks in his report, "the peculiar report of their fire arms," and explains the impression evidently made upon General La Grange, as shown by his endorsement upon my report, in which he characterized the affair as "An act having every appearance of unsoldierly selfishness in appropriating by deception the fruits of another's labor and thus attaining an unearned success, resulting in unnecessary bloodshed and a sacrifice of lives for which no atonement can be made. What may have been intended merely as an act of bad faith toward a fellow soldier, resulted in a crime."

It is painful to think that the im-

pression which was made upon General La Grange, that the reward which had been offered may have been a reason for this undue negligence, on the part of Colonel Pritchard, and his men, occasioned this unfortunate collision, yet it is difficult to forget the promptness with which Colonel Pritchard claimed the reward for himself and men.

I cannot forbear noting, that with respect to the blame, the following at least must be admitted. General Wilson said Colonel Harnden was not to blame. Colonel O. H. La Grange said that Colonel Harnden was not to blame. The committee of Congress exonerated me. Some attempt was made to place some blame on Sergeant George Hussey, who commanded my advance guard, but I exonerate him from any blame and certify that he acted as a brave

and experienced soldier should act, when challenged in the dark by one whom he believed to be an enemy.

The memory of that sad collision has been with me through all these succeeding years. Three of the brave men of my command have carried their crippled forms through life as the result of what might have been easily prevented. And though, it is with deep regret, I feel justified in calling attention to those passages in the official records which seem to bear upon the question as to who is to blame for the collision.

It is a great pleasure to me to leave upon record a testimonial of my respect for the bravery and the character of the men who composed the First Wisconsin Cavalry, a regiment which had a splendid military record, much of which has never been recorded, and which will now

be soon forgotten, as the men who composed the regiment are fast receiving their final discharge from duty. This regiment was in the Second Brigade, First Division Cavalry Corps, Military Division of the Mississippi, Army of the Cumberland. The corps was commanded by Major-General James H. Wilson; the division by Major-General E. M. McCook; the brigade by Colonel O. H. La Grange, and the regiment by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Harnden. This regiment was raised by Professor Edward Daniels, State Geolgist, and he became its first Colonel. It went into camp in July, 1861, at Ripon, and was at first quartered in the college buildings, and afterwards quartered in tents at Kenosha until it left the State. The regiment, as a whole, or in part, was in between fifty and sixty engagements with

the enemy, and lost by death four hundred and three men. My own original company (L) lost forty-nine men. The first chaplain, George Dunmore, was killed. The first surgeon, Dr. Gregory, was also killed, and among the killed were Lieutenant-Colonel Wm. H. Torrey, Major Nathan Payne, Lieutenant Wm. J. Phillips, Lieutenant Sheldon E. Vosberg. A number of the officers died by disease, among whom were Major Henry L. Eggleston, Lieutenant Josiah Bent, Lieutenant Geo. W. Frederick, Lieutenant William S. Cooper, Lieutenant Charles W. Clinton; while Lieutenant Charles N. Hoag, and Lieutenant Henry W. Getchell died of disease or wounds in rebel prisons; and Colonel O. H. La Grange was taken prisoner and remained in confinement for a long time.

Of the forty-eight commissioned officers that went out with the regiment, only four of the original ones were mustered out with it July 19, 1865, when the regiment was mustered out of service of the United States, at Edgefield, Tenn. Of the twelve original Captains, there are only two or three yet living.

The men seemed to be picked men, and I recall many instances of their bravery and devotion to duty. At the time of the collision with the Fourth Michigan, it was difficult to restrain them from charging upon a force apparently greatly superior in numbers, and I remember when I gave Lieutenant Clinton the order to prepare for a saber charge, two of his men understanding that I ordered the charge, drew their sabers, gave spur to their horses, and were half way to the enemy,

when I called them back to the ranks.

I am impressed with the belief that the importance of the capture of Jefferson Davis is sometimes overlooked, as being in reality the close of the war. After his capture there was no one left of prominence or influence in the southern confederacy, who believed that the war could continue. All reports make it clear that he had not yet given up hope of in some way carrying on hostilities further, and there were in the south a great many men who would willingly have joined him had it been possible. Were it not for his capture, he very likely might have crossed the Mississippi to General Kirby Smith, and there have gathered together the troops of the trans-Mississippi, and have continued the war for a long period, entailing a further great loss of life.

It is well-known that after his flight from Richmond he refused to consider his cause hopeless, and was determined to continue the war even after his generals in the East, at a council, had decided that further fighting was useless.

It has always been painful to me to think that in some respect, at least, Jefferson Davis was personally responsible for much of the suffering of the poor men who starved to death in Andersonville and Libby prisons. During the months of March and April, 1865, when the south would have been short of provisions, if ever, Major-General Wilson with his Cavalry, and with not less than fifteen thousand men and eighteen thousand animals, passed down from Alabama to Selma, on the Alabama river, thence east through to Montgomery, and on to Macon, Georgia.

We foraged off the country, and lacked nothing in the way of food for men or animals. We found grain enough to feed our horses, and ham, bacon, and sweet potatoes for all the men, and this, it must be remembered, was only comparatively a short distance from Andersonville, where thousands of Union soldiers were starving to death. I am impressed with the belief that Jefferson Davis might have prevented much of that suffering, and that he more than any other one man, was responsible for the same.

Is it true, as stated in some papers, that some Pennsylvania and Illinois troops were there?

It is not true. There were none but the First Wisconsin and Fourth Michigan Cavalry present.

How was it that the one hundred thousand dollars reward offered for the capture of Davis was at first all awarded to the Fourth Michigan Cavalry?

I was kept on duty with the First Wisconsin Cavalry down in Georgia until the following July, when we were marched to Nashville, Tennessee, and mustered out of service. In the meantime Colonel Pritchard had an opportunity to visit Washington and tell his story, and the consequence was that the whole was first awarded to the Michigan regiment.

For some unaccountable reason my official report was delayed in reaching Washington, and for some time I made no claim to any share in the reward, supposing that Davis would be tried and executed, and in that case I would not have taken

what might be considered blood money; but when it became certain that he was not to be punished, I went to Washington and laid before Congress a claim on behalf of the First Wisconsin Cavalry to a share of the money.

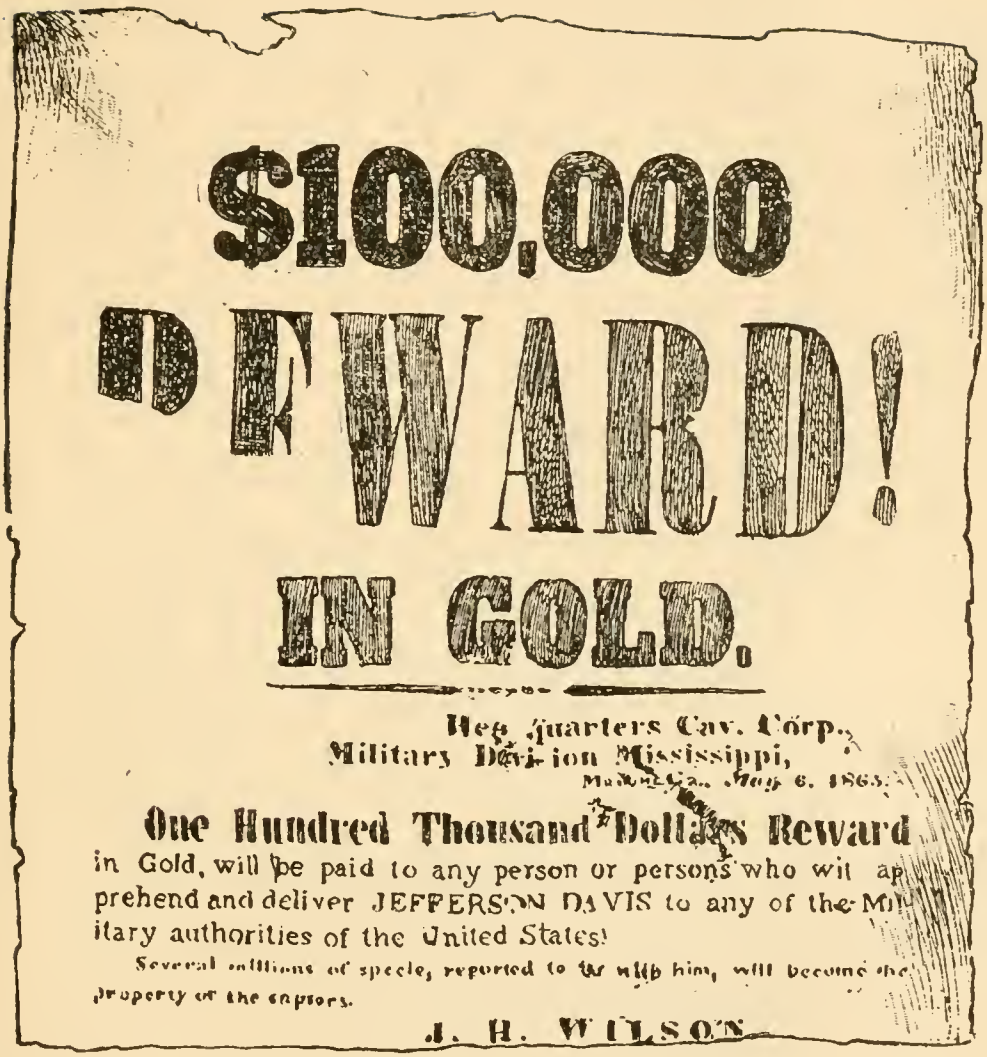
A committee of Congress was appointed, of which Mr. Washburn, of Massachusetts, was chairman, to investigate the whole matter. After due consideration, this committee unanimously reported that General Wilson, Colonel Pritchard, Captain Yeoman, and myself should receive three thousand dollars each, and that the balance should be divided among those who were actually present and took part in the capture, according to rank and pay, the members of each regiment being treated alike. I was exonerated from all blame for the collision.

When the bill as reported came before the house, every republican, except the five members from Michigan, voted for it.

In closing this narrative, I am reminded that as the colored man primarily was the cause of the war, so it was a colored man who really brought it to a close. I refer to my colored servant Bill, who was an unusual character. Just how he came to be my servant, I scarcely know. He attached himself to me quite early in the last campaign, and remained with me until the regiment was mustered out. He was energetic, faithful, devoted and intelligent, far beyond the average. He always knew how to forage, and I could safely trust him to provide me with something to eat, even though hams and chickens could not be

found by other foragers. It was he who brought to me the information without which the capture would have been impossible. It has been to me a source of regret that he did not share more largely in the reward which was given. When I left him, he was made happy in the possession of an old mule and some means of transportation, and had already formed new plans. I am thoroughly convinced that had he not been along with me on that expedition I should have known nothing of Jefferson Davis having been through Dublin on that day, and on the morrow I should have crossed the Oconee River, and gone on towards Savannah, and Jefferson Davis would have escaped capture, and very likely got over the Mississippi River to General Kirby Smith.

In preparing this narrative of the



$100,000 REWARD!

IN GOLD.

Hdq. Quarters Cav. Corp.,
Military Division Mississippi,
Macon, Ga., May 6, 1865.

One Hundred Thousand Dollars Reward

in Gold, will be paid to any person or persons who will apprehend and deliver JEFFERSON DAVIS to any of the Military authorities of the United States!

Several millions of specie, reported to be with him, will become the property of the captors.

J. H. WILSON,

COPY OF A HANDBILL PICKED UP IN GEORGIA AFTER THE WAR.

[From a Reduced Facsimile in *The Century*.]

circumstance of the capture of Davis, I have been assisted by the statements furnished me by many of my old comrades in arms, some of which I here subjoin. It has been a great pleasure to me to renew after nearly a third of a century my associations with them by letter, and to read the kind expressions of good-will which they have sent. I realize that the present is no time for prejudice and passion to control the hearts of the old veterans so near the end of the final march. I have endeavored only to state the facts as correctly as possible, using all sources of information at my command, realizing too the frailty of human memory, and how possible it is for even the best and the most sincere to be mistaken.

To my old comrades in arms, to whom this narrative may come, I

can only express my deep and fervent regards and best wishes for your remaining years, while waiting for your final summons when the general assembly shall once more reform all the ranks of our old regiment.

I.

Statement of Sergeant Hussey.

My name is George G. Hussey; I was a sergeant in Company D, First Regiment, Wisconsin Cavalry. I was one of a detachment of the First Wisconsin Cavalry under Colonel Henry Harnden sent in pursuit of Jeff. Davis, the President of the Southern Confederacy, and I was present at his capture. It was on the morning of May 10, 1865, and before daylight that we were called to stand to horse. It was then that Colonel Harnden said to me: "Sergeant Hussey, you will take six men and ride a little in advance, keep a sharp lookout and report to me anything you see, for we are close up to the enemy, and will probably strike them this morning, so be very careful. March." I then led out, the Colonel with the main column following close behind. It was quite dark and the track we were following was only a trail through the pine

woods. We went forward about one mile or so when suddenly out of the darkness came the challenge, "Halt, who comes there?" I answered, "Friends." Then came the order, "Dismount and come forward and let yourself be known." I could just see the forms of men about twenty or thirty yards away, and seeing there was a large number of them I spoke to my men to retreat, as we turned our horses about, I shouted "Go to hell." At this they fired a volley which wounded three of my six men. Turning back we soon met Colonel Harnden coming up on a gallop at the head of a squad of men. I told the Colonel that we had run into their pickets, and that some of my men were killed or wounded. The Colonel said, "Get out of the way and let us get at them." I then got my men out of the road, and the Colonel, with his men, went forward at a gallop, but they soon received a volley which checked them for a moment, the balance of the men coming up, the Colonel got them into line and then charged upon the enemy, but before doing so, the enemy gave

us the third volley, firing too high to do us much harm. We drove them before us into a swamp where one of them was captured, and from this prisoner we learned to our great surprise that our opponents were Union soldiers, and of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry.

The camp of Jeff. Davis was near at hand, and his capture was effected shortly after the collision took place.

Not having any intimation of the presence of Union troops in that vicinity, and after being so strictly cautioned by the Colonel to look out for the enemy, I feel that I should have been derelict in duty had I obeyed the challenge to dismount and gone forward and surrendered myself and men, and thus let the column go on into a trap and been slaughtered, as certainly would have been the case had our opponents been enemies, as we had every reason to suppose they were. I have since learned that some of the officers of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, those that so wickedly waylaid us, in their report say, that the collision was caused by the improper conduct of the

sergeant in command of the advance of the First Wisconsin Cavalry, and his improper reply when challenged.

Now if was I blamable, I submit to any old soldier, what should I have done under the circumstances? Colonel Harnden and General La Grange, whose opinion I value more than all of the officers of the Fourth Michigan, say that I did right and acted as a good soldier should have done under the circumstances. The Lieutenant in command of the party, who so recklessly fired upon us, says in his report that he challenged when we were eighteen or twenty rods away, and pretends to give quite a conversation between him and me. Now I held no conversation with him except what I have related, and further it is not at all likely that any talk such as he describes, could have been heard at a distance of eighteen or twenty rods apart in a thick wood; the idea that men could have been seen so far away, is simply preposterous, and only told to try to justify him in his wantonly firing upon a party, whom he had every reason to believe were Union

men. The collision which was thus inaugurated resulted in the death of two of the Michigan soldiers, and the wounding of several of both regiments.

GEORGE G. HUSSEY,
Late Sergeant Company C,
First Wisconsin Cavalry.

II.

Statement of Clark W. Seeley.

STATE OF MINNESOTA, } SS.
COUNTY OF JACKSON. }

Clark W. Seeley, being duly sworn on oath, says: "I was a private soldier of Company D, First Wisconsin Cavalry Volunteers. On the morning of May 10, 1865, I was with the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Harnden. Sergeant George Hussey, myself, and five others were detailed to ride in advance, and ordered to keep a sharp lookout ahead, for the Colonel expected we would strike Jeff. Davis' escort that morning. We had marched a mile or so, when we were halted by some one a few rods in advance of us in the dark, who said: "Who comes there?" Hussey answered,

"Friends." We were ordered to dismount and come forward, which Hussey refused to do, and ordered us to retreat, which we did. As soon as we moved, the halting party fired a volley into us, wounding Gus Sykes and myself, and I think Apply. We retired a few rods, and immediately the Colonel, with his command, coming as agreed upon. Sykes and I dismounted here, and the rest moved on after the firing party. We had no ambulance with us. After daylight Sykes and I were put in one of the captured ones, and sent with the Fourth Michigan. When we got back to the ferry the same day, where Colonel Pritchard had left some of his men the day before, we camped for the night. These men came crowding around, and asked how it happend that they fired into the Wisconsin men. Some of them answered and said: "We were ordered to fire, so we fired, but we knew they were Union cavalry by the rattle of the sabers' scabbards." I heard several say the same. At the same time some one said: "Well, who will get the reward?" and one of the

men who had been with us said: "We will, of course, we have got Jeff. Davis." I asked them what reward, and one replied: "Didn't you know there is one hundred thousand dollars reward for the capture of Davis?" I said no, I did not. He said: "Well, there is." I replied to him: "If that is so, I now know why Pritchard ran around us when he said he was going to stay at the ferry." I heard the reward talked of by other Michigan men, frequently in the next few days.

CLARK W. SEELEY,
Company C, First Wisconsin Cavalry.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 26th day of February, 1896.

E. G. GRIMES,
Notary Public, Jackson County, Minnesota.

III.

Verified copy of the pocket diary of W. O. Hargrave, Sergeant Major of the First Wisconsin Cavalry, relating to the capture of Jefferson Davis, on May 10, 1865.

"On May 6, 1865, lying in Macon, Georgia, part of our regiment, Colonel Harnden in command, was ordered out

to the south to look out for and try and intercept Mr. Davis, who was reported to be trying to make his escape after the surrender of General Lee. At 5.00 o'clock P. M. one battalion of our regiment started on the expedition.

Sunday, May 7, 1865, very warm. We are out on hunt for old Jeff. Davis. We hope that we may drop on him. Travelled all last night, reaching Marion at break of day, making about twenty-three miles. No news of Jeff. yet. Left company A to guard cross roads, and patrol the vicinity, without stopping only to feed horses and get dinner; pushing on to Dublin, reaching there about 5:00 o'clock P. M., making about forty-five miles from Macon.

Monday, May 8, 1865. Cloudy, with quite a rain at noon, and light showers in afternoon. Broke camp at 4:00 o'clock A. M., and on strength of information gained, though not very conclusive, started south on the Jacksonville road, along which we pushed some distance, gaining some more confirmatory information. Before noon, the trail left the

main road, and took into the pine woods on an old road leading to the Poor Robin ferry, on the Ocamulgee river. Came to the place where the parties camped last night at noon to-day. Went into camp at night about twenty miles from the Poor Robin ferry.

Tuesday, May 9th. Cool and pleasant after the rain. Broke camp at the grey of day and started on the trail, some times very indistinct through pine woods, and swamps indescribable, reaching the Poor Robin ferry at 11:00 o'clock A. M. Took one and three-quarters hours in crossing our detachment, number about seventy in all. Halted an hour to feed at noon at Abbeville, and just as our bugle sounded the advance, six or seven mounted men in our uniforms charged by us on another road which came in here. We were suprised somewhat, thinking that none of our forces were in the vicinity. They proved to be the Fourth Michigan. Our colonel stopped and communicated to the colonel of the Fourth Michigan, Colonel Pritchard, what information he had

gained in regard to Davis and his party, and asked the colonel of the Fourth Michigan what his orders were, and he informed our colonel that he was to guard the ferry and patrol the river to guard against Davis crossing. We pushed on, following the Davis trail, sometimes quite distinct, and at others faint. At about 9:00 o'clock P. M. our Colonel called a halt, and gave me orders to have the men rest on their arms, and told me to wake the men at 3:00 o'clock A. M., not sounding the bugle, and to send a sergeant and six men in advance.

Wednesday, May 10th, broke camp at 3:45, with Sergeant Hussey and six men in advance. Had made only about two miles when three volleys were fired on our advance, wounding two or three of our men. Forward was the word from our brave Colonel, and it found a quick response from every heart, for we thought of course that we had struck the camp or forces of the arch-traitor, and the resolve was to conquer or die. Our number was only sixty-five or seventy men. The order was given to prepare to fight on foot,

and at the order, forward we went, at double quick to the front, in the face of a deadly fire from a supposed desperate foe. The firing was incessant. They had twenty to thirty dismounted men, the same that had fired on our advance guard, well posted, and had covered behind trees, but they were soon dislodged, and driven like chaff before the wind. By this time a larger mounted force confronted us, but were soon thrown into confusion and were driven by our brave boys half or three-quarters of a mile into a narrow swamp or swale, and within fifty or sixty rods of the Davis camp. Here we took two prisoners which, to our great surprise, proved to be the Fourth Michigan Cavalry. At which, our Colonel ordered firing stopped, we could hardly believe our eyes, the light was now strong enough to distinguish their uniforms. Our feelings could hardly be described or imagined. Sorrow and regret, yet not unalloyed, for Jeff. and his train were captured. We had done our duty, and the responsibility of the collision must be on the Colo-

nel of the Fourth Michigan. I cannot explain it otherwise. His love of notoriety had warped his sense of honor and justice. He had selected about one hundred and fifty of his best mount immediately after learning what he did from our Colonel, and had determined to snatch the prize from our grasp if possible, and by a forced march had got ahead of both us and Jeff.'s train, and had thrown the twenty or thirty men across the trail, between us and Jeff.'s camp, the same that had fired on our advance, and while we were fighting, they had captured Jeff., but I don't envy their position when the facts became known. We had driven them a half mile or more, and had we not taken a prisoner and thus found that we were fighting our own men, we would have recaptured the train in less than twenty minutes. The fight lasted twenty or thirty minutes. Our loss, two or three wounded, two severely, and two horses shot. Their loss, two men killed, and a number wounded. The object of the expedition having been accomplished, Jeff. captured, soon as the wounded were

cared for, and some breakfast gotten, we started on our way back to Macon via Abbeville."

And I would further state, that in addition to the foregoing, copied from my diary, that immediately after the capture of Jeff. Davis, in talking with the Fourth Michigan men, I charged them with firing on us, knowing that we were not Jeff. Davis' men, and they admitted that they thought they were firing on us, and I further asked them why they did so, and in reply they said, that they had to obey orders. I then asked them what their orders were, and they told me that their orders were to allow no one to approach from that direction, and further, on our return, after the capture, when we reached Abbeville, from there into Macon, the road was strewn with handbills offering the reward of one hundred thousand dollars for the capture of Davis, and this was the first information that we had that there was any reward offered for Davis' capture.

This to my mind explained why the Colonel of the Fourth Michigan ran the

risk and acted the part he did, in trying to snatch the prize from our grasp.

W. O. HARGRAVE,
Ripon, Wis.

STATE OF WISCONSIN, } ss.
FOND DU LAC COUNTY. }

W. O. Hargrave, being duly sworn, on oath, says that the annexed and foregoing is a true copy of the original diary, kept by him while in the army of the United States during the War of the Rebellion—a member of the First Wisconsin Cavalry; that the entries in said diary were made at the time of the occurrences to which they relate, and while all the facts were fresh in his memory; that he has carefully compared said copy with said original diary, and that it is a true transcript therefrom and the whole thereof, as to the incidents to which such copy relates.

W. O. HARGRAVE.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 12th day of October, 1897.

A. E. DUNLAP,
Notary Public, Wisconsin.

IV.

Affidavit of J. J. Appling, Orderly of Colonel Harnden.

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA, } ss.
MARSHALL COUNTY. }

J. J. Appling, being duly sworn on oath, says that "On May 9, 1865, I was orderly for Colonel Harnden, commander of the First Wisconsin Cavalry. When in pursuit of Jefferson Davis, about noon of that day, we met the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, and I was present at a conversation which then and there took place between Colonel Pritchard of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, and Colonel Harnden, of the First Wisconsin Cavalry. In response to the question asked by Colonel Harnden of Colonel Pritchard as to his orders, Colonel Pritchard replied that his orders were to go to Abbeville and patrol the river at that place, and he then and there told Colonel Harnden that he should observe those orders. Colonel Harnden then informed Colonel Pritchard that for several days he had been following Jefferson Davis, and that clearly before night he would have him. At this

information Colonel Pritchard asked Colonel Harnden to take one hundred and fifty of his best mounted men to assist in the capture. Colonel Harnden replied that he had enough to take Davis and his escort. Shortly after this conversation, the Fourth Michigan Cavalry started for the river, Colonel Harnden and myself going back as far as where our command had taken the trail of Davis, and rejoined the regiment. I was present at the collision, which occurred between the First Wisconsin and the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, and immediately after the capture of Jefferson Davis, in a conversation with the orderly of Colonel Pritchard, he told me that there was a reward of one hundred thousand dollars for the arrest of Jefferson Davis, Clement C. Clay, and I think some others. This was while we were still on the ground where the capture took place, and this was the first time that any of the First Wisconsin knew anything of any reward having been offered. In the same conversation, the orderly told me that after Colonel Harnden and myself had

left the place where the two Colonels had their conversation, that Colonel Pritchard, after arriving at the river where he was to stay for orders, at once gave orders for one hundred and fifty of his best mounted men to charge down the river towards Irvingville, to which place Colonel Harnden had said Davis was going, and get between Davis and us, and check us while the main command came along and capture Davis.

J. J. APPLING,

Co. K, First Wisconsin Cavalry, detailed as orderly for Colonel Harnden.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 7th day of February, 1898.

W. O. CAMPBELL,

Clerk Circuit Court, Marshall County, South Dakota.

V.

Affidavit of Gus W. Sykes, Private of Company D., First Wisconsin.

CATTLE FALLS, WASHINGTON STATE. } ss.

Gus. W. Sykes, being duly sworn on oath, with respect to the facts of the capture of Jefferson Davis, says: "I was one of the advance squad on the morning of May 10, 1865, advancing upon Davis' camp. As we were advancing, we were challenged by what proved to be the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, and by what we supposed was the guard of the ambulances, which we were following. There was only one man to be seen; as he challenged, Sergeant George Hussey replied 'Friends.' The man standing in the road said, 'Who are you?' Hussey replied, 'Some of your own men.' Hussey then turned to his men saying, 'Save yourselves.'"

Some of the boys behind us had partly turned around. I then said to Hussey, "You are not obeying orders," for as I had been in charge of the advance guard

the day before, I remembered that my orders were to charge if I saw anything that looked suspicious, and we were all in favor of a charge, but before I had scarcely spoken the words, they began firing, and at the second volley, Clark Seeley and myself were badly wounded. My honest opinion is there was no one to blame but Colonel Pritchard. I could have twisted his old neck for him when I found it out. I talked with the lieutenant in charge of the pickets, and he said Colonel Pritchard told him to look out, there were one hundred and sixty Texas rangers camped out on the road one and a half miles. He did not tell me that there were Union soldiers coming on that road, which he, Colonel Pritchard, knew, but the lieutenant did not. The above are the facts, just as I saw them.

GUS. W. SYKES.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 19th of March, 1898.

N. B. WHEELER,
Justice of the Peace.

VI.

From the National Tribune.

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 2, 1896.

E. Richter, Company D, First Wisconsin Cavalry, St. Paul, Minnesota, says: "In your issue of March 12th, General Minty gives an account of the doings of this Fourth Michigan Cavalry during the war. I have no reason to doubt but that the boys of that regiment were as brave as any other soldiers, but when any one of that regiment claims credit for the capture of Jefferson Davis, it sets my bood boiling, knowing the circumstances, and that Lieutenant-Colonel Pritchard had two of his brave men murdered, and several wounded to accomplish his act of treachery toward his fellow officer, Colonel H. Harnden of the First Wisconsin Cavalry.

The less they say about the capture of Davis the better for them, for the blood of the brave men killed and wounded, in the contest between the Fourth Michigan and the First Wisconsin is upon Colonel Pritchard. For particulars I

refer you to the official report of Colonel Harnden, dated May 13, 1865, endorsed by Colonel O. H. La Grange, then commanding brigade and on file in War Record office, War Department, Washington, D. C."

Signed, FRED RICHTER.

VII.

Endorsement Upon Colonel Harnden's Report of the Capture of Jeff. Davis.

Headquarters, Second Brigade, First Cavalry Division, M. D. M., Macon, Georgia, May 14, 1865.

Respectfully forwarded.

From this report it appears that Lieutenant-Colonel Harnden faithfully discharged his duty and no blame can attach to him in relation to the unfortunate collision between his detachment and Colonel Pritchard's, which he had every reason to believe remained at Abbeville. It is, however, a source of painful regret that the satisfaction experienced in this consummation is clouded by the knowledge that an act having every appearance

of unsoldierly selfishness in appropriating by deception the fruits of another's labors, and thus attaining unearned success, resulted in unnecessary bloodshed and a sacrifice of lives for which no atonement can be made. What may have been intended merely as an act of bad faith toward a fellow soldier, resulted in a crime, and for this closing scene of the rebellion, inglorious in itself, but historic by circumstances, it is difficult to repress a wish that accident had not afforded the Government a Representative above suspicion.

(Signed) O. H. LaGrange,
Colonel Commanding.

VIII.

Letter from General O. H. LaGrange.

259 W. 136 St., N. Y.,
4th Feb'y, 1898.

General Henry Harnden:
Madison, Wis.

Dear Friend: My recollection of the Davis capture is as follows: General Wilson sent for me and said: "Captain, Yeomans, of General Alexander's scouts,

has found Mr. Davis in upper Georgia near little Washington, where Bob Toombs lives, and is moving south, trailing the confederate party, and I want to send and capture the party. Have you a battalion that you can send for that purpose?" I replied, "yes, I can send a good battalion in fair condition from the First Wisconsin."

He asked, "Are the horses shod and in condition for a long rapid march?" I answered, "General, the First Wisconsin is always in condition to march or fight." He then asked, "Have you a suitable officer to put in command?" I said, "Yes, Henry Harnden, an old puritan, who will follow the trail to the death, and I think he would rather kill Davis than catch him." Wilson then showed me his communication from Captain Yeomans, and said, "Davis is evidently making for Texas to join Kirby Smith, but we will cut him off." I replied, "If Mr. Davis is wise, he will turn east when he finds you are here and try to get out through Florida to Nassau." He then produced a map which he examined, and then

said, "I will send two battalions, by different routes, to make sure of catching him. I am concerned for the safety of Captain Yeomans, he is very venturesome." General Croxton then came in, and General Wilson told him briefly the news from Yeomans, and asked, "Can you send a battalion for the pursuit?" General Croxton who, in the absence of General McCook, was in command of the First Division, explained that "the horses of his brigade had been so used up by the raid through Tuscaloosa that he did not think a battalion in condition for a long rapid march could be selected from the whole brigade." General Wilson said, "all right, I'll send to Minty." He then asked me, "How long before your battalion will be ready to march?" I answered, "In five minutes after I reach camp, and I'll run my horse all the way." As I reached the door to come out, leaving him and Croxton together, General Wilson called out: "LaGrange, I think one of these parties will capture Mr. Davis, there will be some eclat about it. Don't you want to go in command of

both detachments?" I replied, "If Mr. Davis had a brigade down there, I'd like to take the Second and whip him, but I'll be damned if I want to turn constable after the war is over." All this is very distinct in my mind because I wrote it down in a letter at that time, which letter I have recently re-read.

I think Generals Wilson and Croxton were preparing your instructions when I left, and if you received them from Croxton, it was to save time and because he was commanding our Division temporarily in McCook's absence.

But I wish to emphazize the fact, that *I designated you for the duty*, as I have no doubt General Wilson will *remember*. When you returned and sent in your admirable and very modest report, I immediately endorsed it, and sent a copy through Division Headquarters to the Corps Headquarters, and another to save delay direct to General Wilson.

The next morning the General said to me, "You were very severe on Colonel Pritchard in your endorsement of Harnden's report, won't you withdraw the pa-

per and modify your endorsement?" I replied, "The facts are severe on Colonel Pritchard, my endorsement is true, and it must stand." After arguing ineffectually to show me the unwisdom of differences among ourselves now that the war was over, the General said, "Well, if you insist, don't you think Colonel Pritchard ought to have a copy of the paper?" I replied, "I sent him a copy by the same messenger who brought yours." The General asked, "What will you do if he calls you out?" I replied: "I will hit him, and have some respect for him afterwards, but a man who will do what Colonel Pritchard has done will never call anybody out."

You know the story of how your report *with my endorsement*, finally reached the files of the War Department through Fred. Richter. I do not remember when we got news of the reward offered for Davis, though I think I saw the posters making the announcement. General Wilson no doubt would recall it all distinctly. Possibly Pritchard's regiment was camped across the river from town,

and did not see the posters which came out after you had marched. I would believe Pritchard's statement that he did not know of the reward until after the capture, but for his dastardly conduct towards you in the pursuit. I do not believe his statement because his conduct took from him all credit as a man, and lying, or perjury, or subornation of perjury, would be natural for one who had deceived a fellow soldier to his injury, in the face of the enemy. When General Wilson sent me to Washington with letters to General Grant, General Howard, and Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, I handed to General Hawkins, of General Grant's staff, a copy of a recommendation which had been approved by General Wilson, that "the reward be used to create a pension for the soldiers who were wounded, and the families of those who were killed in the encounter between your detachment and Pritchard's." General Hawkins came out of General Grant's room into his own, where I was sitting, and said, "The General will endorse his approval." Whether that rec-

ommendation went to the files, or went to hunt my endorsement on your report, I never knew or asked. In fact I never read the accounts of the controversy over the reward as published in the newspapers, I was too busy reading law at Albany. But one thing I knew then and know now, and that is that your conduct was manly, patriotic and honorable, as became your character, throughout that complicated matter, and I trust that with health fully restored, you may long continue to enjoy the esteem and honor of your fellow citizens and comrades of the volunteers.

Always your friend,

O. H. LaGrange.

List of officers and men of the First Wisconsin Cavalry, engaged in the pursuit and capture of Jefferson Davis.

Henry Harnden, Lieutenant-Colonel.
O. P. Clinton, Second Lieutenant, Co. B.
W. O. Hargrave, Sergeant-Major.
James J Aplin, Private, Company K.
Austin M. Horr, Sergeant, Company A.
David N. Bell, Private, Company A.
William Billsback, Private, Company A.
Martin M. Coleman, Private, Company A.
William Dezer, Private, Company A.
John Huntamer, Private, Company A.
Gottlieb Kleinlein, Private, Company A.
Sidney Leonard, Private, Company A.
James McStilson, Private, Company A.
Geo. W. Silsbee, Private, Company A.
Christopher Steinbrook, Private, Compa'y A.
Herbert Shelter, Private, Company A.
Luther L. Blair, Sergeant, Company B.
Melvin T. Olin, Sergeant, Company B.
John Clark, Sergeant, Company B.
Thomas P. Culbertson, Corporal, Comp'y B.
James H. McCrary, Corporal, Company B.
Ezra H. Stewart, Corporal, Company B.
Albert L. Beardsley, Private, Company B.

Thomas Coleman, Private, Company B.
Rawson P. Franklin, Private, Company B.
Sylvester Fairbanks, Private, Company B.
William Gill, Private, Company B.
William Grimes, Private, Company B.
Lewis Jacobson, Private, Company B.
Honore Leverner, Private, Company B.
William Matski, Private, Company B.
Ira Miller, Private, Company B.
John L. Nolan, Private, Company B.
John W. Norton, Private, Company B.
Warren P. Otterson, Private, Company B.
Stephen Poquette, Private, Company B.
William A. Spangler, Private, Company B.
Frederick Steinfield, Private, Company B.
Joseph Smith, Private, Company B.
George D. Wright, Private, Company B.
John Wagner, Private, Company B.
George G. Hussey, Sergeant, Company D.
J. M. Wheeler, Sergeant Company D.
G. W. Sykes, Corporal, Company D.
L. P. Pond, Corporal, Company D.
Joseph Myers, Corporal, Company D.
George D. LaBordle, Corporal, Company D.
Nelson Appley, Private, Company D.
P. H. Anderson, Private, Company D.
Donald Brander, Private, Company D.
F. A. Bublitz, Private, Company D.
J. S. Burton, Private, Company D.

Lawrence Bird, Private, Company D.
Joseph Beguen, Private, Company D.
A. J. Craig, Private, Company D.
Thomas Day, Private, Company D.
Thomas Dixon, Private, Company D.
Jerrod Fields, Private, Company D.
James Foley, Private, Company D.
Jacob Gusch, Private, Company D.
D. H. Goodrich, Private, Company D.
Lewis Hartung, Private, Company D.
N. M. Hephner, Private, Company D.
C. Helgerson, Private, Company D.
Henry Hamilton, Private, Company D.
A. E. Johnson, Private, Company D.
John Ludwig, Private, Company D.
M. F. Nickerson, Private, Company D.
P. W. O'Heron, Private, Company D.
J. A. L. Pooch, Private, Company D.
Alexander Pengilly, Private, Company D.
Arne Renom, Private, Company D.
Jerome Roe, Private, Company D.
Herman A. Stone, Private, Company D.
John Spear, Private, Company D.
Henry Seidenburg, Private, Company D.
J. A. Warren, Private, Company D.
C. W. Seely, Private, Company D.
Bill, colored servant, Private, Company D.

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